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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: TYPHOON COUNTER-NARCOTICS OPERATION

¶1. Summary: Law enforcement agencies of Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, with the assistance of Afghanistan, broke up one of the largest Central Asian trafficking organizations. As a result of the multi-stage operation "Typhoon" conducted over the past three years, law enforcement initiated 24 criminal cases and arrested 42 active members of an international drug ring, including 14 citizens of Kazakhstan. A total of 800 kilos of heroin and 100 kilos of opium were seized in the four countries during the operation. End Summary.

¶2. On January 17, a multi-year operation conducted by the Committees for National Security (in Kazakhstan, KNB) and Border Guard Services of Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan culminated in the arrest of B. Makhmudkhodzhaev (AKA "Boar"), the head of one of the largest narco-trafficking organizations in the region, and five of his accomplices in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. At the time of their arrest, Makhmudkhodzhaev and his accomplices were in possession of ten kilos of heroin. As a result of the operation, all branches of his operations were disrupted in the participating countries.

¶3. Makhmudkhodzhaev, a citizen of Tajikistan residing in Tashkent, organized and managed the secretive and well-organized group transporting heroin and opium through Central Asia to Russia. The drug couriers transported drugs via two routes: from Shymkent (on the Kazakhstani-Uzbek border) through Taraz, Karaganda, Astana, and Petropavlovsk and from Shymkent through Taraz, Almaty, Taldy Korgan, and Ust-Kamenogorsk.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

¶4. Law enforcement began targeting Makhmudkhodzhaev in February 2004, when he was identified as the main source of heroin and opium to the largest Kazakhstani drug ring operated by Ilkham Mirzakhmedov. In an earlier operation against Mirzakhmedov's organization, 14 people, including Mirzakhmedov, were convicted and sentenced to prison. The KNB seized 200 kilos of heroin and 30 kilos of opium. Following the arrest of Mirzakhmedov, the Kazakhstani KNB followed the trail to Makhmudkhodzhaev and continued its investigation.

¶5. The KNB struck a second blow at Makhmudkhodzhaev by halting the delivery of a large quantity of narcotics bound for Russia. The drug couriers were stopped in Kostanaiskaya oblast (Northern Kazakhstan) on the Kazakhstani-Russian border in October 2005. The operation resulted in the seizure of 70 kilos of opium and 20 kilos of heroin.

BOAR RETREATS

¶6. After the arrest of his associates in Kazakhstan,

Makhmudkhodzhayev stopped traveling to Kazakhstan and moved his residence from Tajikistan to Uzbekistan. Living in Tashkent, he substantially extended the scale of his criminal activity and became one of the main traffickers of narcotics from Afghanistan to Central Asia and Russia. By this time, Boar was purchasing directly from farmers in Afghanistan. During a press conference on February 14, German Didenko, Head of the Kazakhstani KNB Division on Combating International Drug Trafficking explained that a portion of the heroin trafficked through Kazakhstan remained in the local market. For the most part, shipments of less than 10 kilos remained in Kazakhstan for local sale. He also said that the heroin transported through Kazakhstan was extremely pure and was transported by drug couriers in nut shells, persimmons, and cheese. Couriers also used natural gas tanks on vehicles.

17. During the investigation into Boar's activities, agents and operations officers worked undercover in his cartel. As a result of the undercover work, law enforcement was able to closely monitor Makhmudkhodzhayev and his operations throughout the region. Eight special operations conducted from May 2007 through February 2008 in Almaty, Shymkent, Karaganda and Petropavlovsk led to the seizure of 100 kilos of heroin. German Didenko also announced that the operation was successful due to the close cooperation of Afghanistan. In 2007, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding to fight narcotics.

18. Comment. This large-scale, multinational operation proves that the countries of Central Asia and Russia are capable of cooperating in the long-term fight against narco-traffickers. The operation began prior to the opening of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC), but future operations are expected to be coordinated through CARICC. This operation is also proof of Kazakhstan's new focus on quality operations against entire cartels and not just arrests of drug couriers to increase its seizure

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statistics.

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